



News Release

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Contact: Lt. Col. Jackie Guthrie

Office: 608-242-3050 or Cell: 608-516-1777

NEWS: Deployed Wisconsin, Michigan aviators honored for excellence in Iraq

By Spc. Raymond Quintanilla
305th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

BASRA, Iraq – Despite a full agenda, a senior general from United States Forces-Iraq took time to recognize deployed Wisconsin and Michigan National Guard Soldiers during a Nov. 30 visit to Basra.

Maj. Gen. Nelson J. Cannon, USF-I's deputy commanding general of detainee operations and a 32-year veteran of the Michigan National Guard, presented coins of excellence as tokens of his appreciation to Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment, a National Guard unit comprised of 400 Soldiers from Wisconsin and Michigan. The battalion is deployed to Basra in support of the 1st Infantry Division and U.S. Division-South.

"It's hard to get around as you well know, to see everybody on a regular basis," Cannon said, "but I did want to make a point to get down here and let you know you have done a great job for us down here. You have done an outstanding job."

1st Sgt. Steward Wenino, from Port Huron, Mich., and the 1-147th, said Cannon's visit boosted the morale of those recognized.

"For our maintenance guys, they don't get to see the higher ranking people," Wenino said. "They're the back of the mission nobody sees. It was very beneficial for our Delta Company to be recognized by a major general, to see the support aspect and receive some recognition."

Staff Sgt. Jay Anderson, a patrol and supply specialist with the 1-147th, said he was surprised and enjoyed the special lunch scheduled just for them.

"It definitely feels nice to see the general take a little time from his busy schedule," said Anderson, a native of Waukesha. "It feels great you are being noticed, that someone is actually paying attention to the hard work everybody puts in."

With the mission still in mind, Cannon expressed the importance of the 1st Infantry Division's continuing support and the challenges the 1-147th faces with the downsizing of troops and new mission of Operation New Dawn.

"It's not a matter of how much time we have left," Cannon said, "but it is each and every day of making every engagement count, [ensuring] every effort serves the purpose we are trying to achieve."

Cannon said with downsizing expected to continue, Soldiers such as the 1st Infantry Division and 1-147th are the right troops to get the job done in Iraq.

"You are part of the right 50,000," Cannon said. "The right 'can do' attitude to go out and make things happen, get it done when everybody else thinks this is going to be too hard."

The general said he felt preparing Iraq's new democratic government for success is the most critical task, and those involved are sharing a common bond in making history.

"To have planted that seed in this part of the world is huge and that's the destiny of the United States," Cannon said. "We want to see democracy in the world and democracies aren't easy to manage, but it's the right thing to do."

"And you are all a part of that, you all help make history," he continued, "especially here as we get to the end. This is where we have to close the deal, finish strong."

The 147th reported for active duty June 17 and trained for six weeks at Fort Hood. They arrived in Iraq in September. The Soldiers are responsible for all aviation operations — including troop and cargo movements, medevac and attack missions — in United States Division-South, which covers nine provinces of Iraq, including the area south of Baghdad.

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[Story with photo online](#)

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CAPTION — Maj. Gen. Nelson J. Cannon, the deputy commanding general for detainee operations, United States Forces-Iraq, presents a coin of excellence to Staff Sgt. Melissa Barber-Kosikowski of Fond du Lac, and the assistant flight operations non-commissioned officer with the 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment. Cannon presented coins of excellence to Soldiers from the 1st Infantry Division from Fort Riley, Kan., and the 1-147th, a National Guard unit comprised of Soldiers from Michigan and Wisconsin, for their selfless service and dedication to duty. 305th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Spc. Raymond Quintanilla

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